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and India to find some evidence that the Oriental nations were acquainted with the use of the pointed arch. A little attention to the psychology of art would have prevented this error. Gothic architecture is connected with the Crusades only as an expression of the same spiritually enthusiasm.

[To be continued.]

THE ITALIAN OPERA IN PARIS.

There were two growths of the last century whose influence has extended to our day, and become wide-spread,—one the French idea, and the other the Italian opera. I would not compare them for importance, and I have no wish to weigh the glory of the cavatina in the same balance with that magnificent march of mind which stirred up worlds and brought about the explosion of '89. It is only that these two things, so dissimilar in every respect, grew up and wrought their wonders at the same time, that I mention them together. There were intervals when the music of Italy drowned the philosophy of the Encyclopedists themselves; and coextensive with our critical and liberal spirit spread this marvel of Italy. It was the fashion for kings to become Voltairians and *dilettanti*; and nothing would do but they must have both the French *philosophe* and the Italian *maestri* at their courts. So it came about that not a capital nor first-class city but had its Italian opera. Its geographical empire has stretched from Moscow to Libson, from Dublin to Constantinople, in the Old World, and covered every part of the New. It is not only that its genuine productions are everywhere, but its influence permeates the German and French schools. *Guillaume Tell*, *Le Freyschütz*, *Les Huguenots*, *La Juive*, *La Muette*, are only Italy under another nationality. Weber and Meyerbeer as much at home among the Italians as farther north. However interpreters may be indispensable, and however imperfect the sweet tongue of the South may be in certain respects, it is still the one universal language in music.

In America they have the Italian opera alone. In Russia, in England, in Spain, it is still the Italian which predominates, notwithstanding the commendable success of their native muse. The country, however, which has produced the *Frey-schütz* has no occasion longer to envy the lyrical fruits of the land of Cimarosa and Rossini, nor to borrow from them. Still, we can see that in spite of the masterpieces of Weber, and the national fervor which he inaugurated, and Mendelssohn and Schumann continued, and Wagner transported almost to a certain terrorism,—in spite of this, the Italian opera has still preserved its rights at Vienna and Berlin. It would seem, indeed, as if Germany were glad to preserve the memory of the land beyond the mountains whence it derived its own impulse, for it can be shown how the whole dynasty of their great musicians,—Handel, Hasse, Mozart, Gluck, and Meyerbeer,—have all worked at the start in the lead of the Italian spirit and form.

In France, where the tragic and comic opera, long since perfected, have developed in accordance with our national traits in a manner quite different from the tradition of the Italians, it has nevertheless happened that we have given the foreign a firm position among our public

institutions. Not long since it received a subsidy from the state, and there are not a few among our artists and amateurs who pray that it might be given it still. The *Théâtre-Italien* has at least preserved the qualification of the Imperial favor, which it shares with the *Grand Opéra*, the *Opéra Comique*, the *Comédie-Française*, the *Odéon*, and the *Théâtre Lyrique*.

Its claims are ancient,—going back to those music representations which took place at Lyons in 1548, and which Brantôme, minutely describes as being totally unlike anything they had known in France. Since this first visit of the *Gelosi* (as they called the Italian drolls of the sixteenth century) repetitions of such events did much to incite a taste with us for the lyrical drama, and to stimulate our composers to exercise their skill in this department. I write of this thing carefully, for I do not wish to be confounded with the historians of music, who have flippantly asserted (and been believed) that our dramatic music sprang from a mere imitation of the Italian, since personal and national traits have stood in the way of this; and, however we may have borrowed the form in general, it has been essentially French work and French inspiration that have animated our creations. When, for example, we refer to the *Ballet Comique de la Reine*, organized in 1581 by Baltazarini, an attendant of Catherine de Medici, in imitation of the *Feste Teatrali* of Florence, we shall find that the poetry was that of La Chesnaye, and the music by the king's musicians, Claudin Lejeune, Salmon, and Beaulieu,—and this ballet was the constant model of all those that subsequently flourished under Henri IV., Louis XIII., and Louis XIV.

If we consider the very important influence of the Italians (brought hither by Mazarin) upon our own opera, we must still discover that the earliest French scores of Lambert and Lulli differed essentially from those of Rossi and Cavalli, and that our lyrical drama at the outset was carefully distinguished from the Italian. With that exception, we will cheerfully acknowledge that the presentations of *Euridice* and *La Finta Pazzo* supplied to our French poets and composers the idea of the opera.

It was precisely the same with the comic drama. Doubtless the first operas of the Italian drolls represented at Paris determined the vocation of Monsigny and Philidor; true it is that Grétry begun his studies in Italy, and that the translations of sundry Italian operettas marked a sensible advance in the style of composition and the taste of the masses; nevertheless, we must not forget that the comic opera existed with us before that Italian invasion of 1752, and that even afterwards all the masterpieces of this sort, like *Les Troqueurs*, *Rose et Colas*, *Tom Jones*, and even the *Devin du Village* of Rousseau (that ardent neophyte of the Italian school), showed less in common with the *Servant Padrona* than with *La Chércheuse d'Esprit* of Favart and the other little comedies of the Saint-Laurent Fair. Still, the Italian influence was a stimulant; and the result, if not imitation, was emulation,—and that is much better. This is, however, at variance with the awards of the historians generally. They hold the Italian school to have reached much nearer perfection than ours at that time, and gauge all our composer's merits by their slavish adaption to it, counting a departure from it a crime and any national character of no avail.

When we come down to Gluck, it could no longer be said that the type furnished by Pergoles and Tomelli was the only one. Their preponderating influence was set aside, or at least contested. Some years later, it was a German, Mozart himself who gave even the Italians the most beautiful of models; still later, Weber offered the world those masterpieces, which excelled in elevated conception and profundity of style even the growth of Italian suns, and became more worthy than such to be taken as subjects of study and admiration.

What is true of the works is also true of their interpreters. The school of Italian singing is admirable; and they have attained in it the ideal in a certain sense, but in that only. While admiring and studying it, our artists have been right in following another instinct and creating another taste. It is easily said that Lemaure, Sophie Arnoud, and Saint Hubert sing badly; but when *La Servante Maitresse* of Pergolese was played at Paris alternately in Italian and French, and the *role* passed from La Tenelli to Mme. Favart, there may have been a loss of conventional skill, but there was no diminution of spirit, nature, or grace. According as we approach our time, the prepossession becomes less marked. It must be granted that Mme. Branchu, the sublime interpreter of Gluck, and Garat, the head professor of our *Conservatoire*, could well equal the Raffanelli and the Grassini, and that the late M. Martin has some merit in his line. During the Restoration, the Italian school flourished indeed supreme. Paris had the joyful privilege of such an assembly of singers as had never before been known, and probably never will be again. At the same time a repository of an order at least equal begun to grow up at the *Opéra Français*, and it was Rossini which was laying its corner-stone; and there were singers too of our own, like Nourrit and Mme. Falcon, who were able to sustain the honor of the French name.

It is said that Duprez came from Italy transformed. The fact is notorious; but it is rather a laughable commentary, that he came back less an Italian than he went. He brought back a style, taste, and dramatic sentiment totally at variance with that which Rubini has shone in with equal but not superior talent. By a singular chance, too, the *Opéra* and the *Conservatoire* began the education of Mario, who so soon relapsed into his own national style and became the most Italian of tenors. This kind of exchanges among the school is multiplying yearly, and to-day it has become a matter of course. How many German and French artists have passed to the Italian stage! and it would be a difficult matter to say on which side is the greater obligation.

We are not very partial to this sort of communion, which risks the confusing of style, taste, and talent. In spite of brilliant exceptions, we still of the opinion that the music of a country has a better chance of being written and executed by the national artists, and that by no other means can we hope to reach an ideal excellence. It is a principle that we hardly dare stand by, because it is at variance with the customs and tendencies of our time. There will come a day, however, when we may weary of this confusion of tongues,—this musical Babel. For the present there is no longer need of saying more of the Italian school of singers; and in saying it,

we do not withhold our admiration for certain artists whose talent has I know not what air of exception, which only goes to prove our rule. When Patti came to us from America and England, she was only a great artist of fantasy: year by year she has formed a style at Paris. Fraschini, who consecrates to Verdi a little too exclusively his fine voice and pure taste, is doubtless a singer by nature; but a better drilled and better modulated voice, a more conscientious as well as more diverse method, and the scenic knowledge of Faure, would prove more to him than a good school, if there can be a question of schools to-day.

The *Theatre Italien* is less far removed from an ideal perfection than most, and needs but little effort to realize that condition. The present administration seems to us, above all, to attach itself to the fortunes of some *maestro* of the hour. It lavishes upon its patrons the works of Verdi as long as they will bear them, and perhaps longer. We know that such seasons prevail at Milan and Naples, and that the theatres there are still more given up to *Verdism*, if possible; but we likewise know that the dilettanti of Paris differ greatly from those of the Peninsula, where they are only capable of enjoying one kind of music at a time, and carry their rage for that sometimes to a fanatical excess. Rossini has eclipsed for them the old masters; but to-day they adore nothing but Verdi, and will adore him until they drop him at once and completely. At such a time, perhaps, the *Trouvere* and *Rigoletto* will still be played at Paris. If any Italian exclaims at this statement, I ask him what has become in Italy of Rossini's youthful works, which made so much stir among them fifty years ago, and which are now nowhere played but among ourselves? The French dilettanti is less fanatical, but he is more faithful. Lively and giddy as was the favor with which we received Rossini at first, we never offered Mozart or Cimarosa as a sacrifice to our admiration of him. This faithfulness is the complement, if I may so speak, of our French hospitality. We have had with us so many geniuses from all parts, that it would be difficult for Verdi, a new guest, to monopolize our mansion, and claim all our sympathy and admiration. He is much liked indeed at Paris; they have in the repertory of the *Grand Opera* two of his works, two at the *Theatre-Lyrique*; and he ought naturally to have a large share of consideration at the Italian Opera; but any undue predominance will surely react against him, and we might pass from extreme favor to extreme injustice. We should soon tire of such exclusiveness, and cry out for the ideal emotions of *Don Juan*, the infinite grace of the *Nozze*, the wholesome and delicious gayety of *Matri-monio*, the sparkling spirit and exuberant wealth of Rossini, the elegiac tenderness of Bellini, and the fine passion of Donizetti.

In prosperous seasons, a succession of some twenty operas, giving three nights to each, are given before an audience who are subscribers for the entire season; and it needs all the power of custom and fashion to render the same kind of music endurable during these six months. It is true that lately we have seen Donizetti dispute occasionally the sway of Verdi, but the two are much too near alike to offer the proper variety, and we have but occasional ruptures of

the monotony in *Le Barbier* and *La Somnambule*; while the artists, from long disuse, are wholly unprepared to offer us the possible variety of their resources, that might come from the happy alternation of Rossini and Mozart, Bellini and Pergolesi, Donizetti and Paisiello, Verdi and Cimarosa. The ancients and moderns, far from obscuring each other, would be separately enhanced by the contrast.

The preceding administration at the Italian opera, urged by the critics, had begun this career, without regretting it. *Così fan tutti*, restored after a neglect of forty years, was the great success of the winter of 1863,—enough alone to offset the fortunes of Patti, and to prove that an Italian theatre may be something else than the theatre of the latest music lion.

I know that the principal obstacle is not in the preferences of the director, but in the sluggishness and stunted education of the artists. They came for the most part from Italy, with attainments that they have no care to increase; and the old *repertoire*, of which they are ignorant, is naturally their aversion. It is an obstacle, but not an insurmountable one. Naudin was astonished to find his great success in *Così fan tutti* which, it is reported, he had undertaken with no little distrust. In that pretty romance, *Una Aura Amorosa*, he saw himself suddenly the hero of the season. *Le Mariage secret*, gotten up with scarcely greater hope, disproved likewise their fearful apprehensions, and never has a work been better performed, with the marvel of song and acting which Mmes. Penco, Alboni, and Marie Battu gave to it.

No one has ever denied that *Les Nozze di Figaro* is superior to *Così fan tutti* and *Le Mariage secret*; but how is it possible that five or six years could pass without finding them on our boards? and at their last revival they could scarcely reach a third night. No one will dispute the ideal worth of *Don Juan*, and yet it was laid aside after the second performance, and last winter we had it only once. Is this the fault of the public? Assuredly not, since *Les Noces* reaches its three-hundredth time at the *Théâtre Lyrique*. The same house has at this moment in rehearsal the *Don Juan* of Mozart, as well as the *Grand Opéra*, and we can safely predict a double triumph for the old master. The reason is simply this,—that on the stage of the French opera they take pains to study what they have to do, before offering it to the public. It was my fortune some years ago to be present at these rehearsals at the Italian house. They ordinarily gave but one to each piece. The performers merely hummed through their parts, to assure themselves their memories were not at fault; and the orchestra went through their share as carelessly. As to the stage business and situations, they were left to be devised impromptu on the evening of its performance. Such a course might do for *Linda* or *Maria di Rohan*, but for *Don Juan* it is quite another matter, and for reasons that it is hardly necessary to enumerate.

A work so complex and delicate in both vocal and instrumental detail demands a choice of performers (which they do not give it), repeated rehearsals, and annual repetition, to insure its excellence. All this, it is true, supposes a faithful and well-mated company. But the case is far otherwise. The interests of our theatre are united with that of Madrid, and the performers

have to pass and repass the Pyrenees in the performance of their duties, beside whatever may be done on lesser engagements at Rouen and Brussels. Such a singer will be engaged for only a month and a half, perhaps; such another for a given number of evenings. They arrive here, make the theatre an inn, as it were, for a few days, and then are gone; and what perfection can we expect of them? They have neither time nor desire to improve. They sing a few repetitions of their three or four favorite parts, which one can't blame them for doing; but unfortunately their favorites are those of all the rest, and so we are continually supplied with just the same music.

With a fit company it of course must be otherwise. Each singer will feel himself obliged to be prepared with a due variety; and a new opera is esteemed a piece of good fortune rather than otherwise. No one is content with what he has done, but is constantly striving to do better; and by repeated fellowship they grow mutually dependent and jointly superior. Beside this, such a prolonged community of labor works as favorably upon the public, and their education becomes reciprocal. Such experience gave us Rubini, Tamburini, Lablache, Malibran, Sontag, and Grisi. I hold it for certain that the prime cause of their perfection consisted in their being trained to each other. It was diamonds polishing diamonds.

The advent of a marvelously gifted singer like Patti is always a good fortune for the theatre, the public and art; but it may nevertheless be turned to evil, and give place to reverses, servitudes, and disappointments; and the critical moment of such a change can be indicated with precision. It is when admiration degenerates to unreasonable infatuation, and when the public is blinded to both the faults of its favorite and the merits of its fellows. The result is discouragement to all others, and the public has no longer a company, no longer a theatre, but only an idol.

It is needless to say that it cannot be otherwise, and that extraordinary genius always demands this as a condition. Did Le Kain prevent the success of Prévile, the Dumesnil, or the Clarion? Did Talma eclipse the Duchesnois or Mlle. Georges? Did Mlle. Mars suppress Molé, Fleury, or Monrose? This perilous supremacy of Mlle. Patti has only one precedent—an illustrious one, and within short memories. Rachel had the fatal power of crushing all about her on a stage that had incontestable merit in such others as Beauvallet and Ligier. We all remember how the house used to empty itself as soon as Rachel had spoken her last verse, without pity for the other performers that remained to go on; and, what is worse, without any respect for the masterpieces of Racine and Corneille. Usually a comedy of Molière closed the performances; but it was given to empty benches, despite the talent it brought forth in Samson, Geffroy, Provost, Regnier, and the rest. Assuredly when Rachel left us it was a cruel eclipse, and a loss irreparable for art. Nevertheless, it must be said that the repertory has regained its rights, and the theatre has recovered its prosperity, outside of the domain of tragedy: for to-day one can hear Molière and Beaumarchais as they should be.

[To be continued.]